

VISA 101:

The Basics of Hiring St. Olaf International Students

This guide is designed to help you gain basic information about common visa types and discover how easy it can be for students/employers to acquire work authorization.

Common visa types and work authorization:

F – 1 Students

- Most common non-immigrant student visa type.
- Students can receive work authorization before completion of degree (internships), called Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Employment must be related to student's field of study. International Student Advisor authorizes CPT for St. Olaf students for up to one year of full-time CPT before degree completion. Processing time = 1 week minimum.
- Students can receive up to one year of full-time Optional Practical Training (OPT) after degree completion. OPT is authorized by the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**. Employment must be related to student's field of study. Processing time = 3 months.
- Students who earned their degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field can apply for 17-month extension of OPT if the employer is e-verify.

H – 1B Employees

- Employer-specific and job-specific visa allowing foreign nationals to be employed by a U.S. company, institution or organization for up to six years.
- Students can start employment with F-1 CPT, OPT, and change to H-1B during first year.
- Job must require specialized knowledge and employee must have received degree *before* petition for visa is submitted. Typically for "specialty occupations."
- Wage for position must meet U.S. Department of Labor regulations.

For additional information: <http://wp.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/international-students-and-internships/>

Required steps and what this means for you as an employer:

F – 1

- For Internships (CPT): Students acquire appropriate authorization from academic adviser and submit paperwork to St. Olaf International Student Advisor and the Piper Center. **No additional steps need to be taken by the employer.**
- For Employment After Graduation (OPT): Students submit proper paperwork to the St. Olaf International Student Advisor and USCIS. Student receives Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card via mail and shows employer. **No additional steps need to be taken by the employer.**

H – 1B

- Employer petitions USCIS on behalf of a particular foreign employee for a specific position. **Employers are required to pay most expenses related to H-1B applications.** Employer's HR or legal staff, or an outside attorney, usually handles the H-1B application.

*** For additional information on hiring F-1 students from St. Olaf College, please contact the International Student Advisor at (507) 786-3995 or carmes@stolaf.edu. For hiring H-1B employees check the USCIS website (<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>) or contact an immigration attorney ***